

# REVERSE ENGLISH ON SONNY BOY

Drawings by P. Vaux Wilson

By SEWELL FORD

**D**O you know, Shorty," says J. Bayard Steele, balancin' his bamboo walkin' stick thoughtful on one forefinger, "I'm gettin' to be a regular expert in altruism."

"Can't you take something for it?" says I.

But he waves aside my comedy stab and proceeds, chesty and serious, "Really, I am, though. It's this philanthropic executor work that I've been dragged into doing by that whimsical will of your friend, the late Pyramid Gordon, of course. I must admit that at first it came a little awkward, not being used to thinking much about others; but now—why, I'm getting so I can tell almost at a glance what people want and how to help them!"

"Huh!" says I. "Then you're some wizard. It often bothers me to dope out just what I need myself; and when it comes to decidin' for other folks— Say, have you tackled envelope No. 4 on Pyramid's list yet?"

"I have," says J. Bayard, smilin' confident. "Peculiar case too. A month or so ago I should have been puzzled. Now it seems very simple. I've done all my investigating, made my plans, and if you will run downtown to a lawyer's office with me after luncheon we shall meet the beneficiaries-to-be and fix up the details of a nice little deed of kindness of which I am the proud author."

"Fat commission in it for you, eh?" says I.

J. Bayard looks pained and hurt. "Really," says he, "I hadn't thought of that. No, the outlay will be slight. In fact, it's merely a matter of launching a young man in society."

"Well, well!" says I. "That's a husky job for a couple of grown men like us, ain't it? Who's the young gent—Clarence what?"

"Ever hear of Hungry Jim Hammond?" says he.

**I**HAD, but couldn't quite place him; so J. Bayard supplies the description. He'd started out as a railroad man, Hammond had, back in the days when Pyramid Gordon was first beginnin' to discover that swappin' hot air for votin' shares was perfectly good business so long as you could get away with the goods. Only Hammond was the real thing. He was a construction expert.

Mr. Gordon had found him on the payroll of a line he'd annexed by a midnight deal; concluded he knew too much about the job to be a safe man to have around; so he transfers him to the Far West and sets him to work on a scheme to lay out a road parallelin' the Southern Pacific. Hammond couldn't tell it was a stall. He blazes merrily ahead surveyin' a right of way across three States, and had got as far as Death Valley when the rumor comes to camp that this new line is all a fake.

Hammond had a gang of twenty-five or thirty men with him, and his weekly pay check hadn't shown up for about a month. But he couldn't believe that Pyramid had laid down on him. He'd got mighty int'rested in buildin' that road across the desert, and had dreamed some rosy dreams about it. But his men felt different. They wanted action on the cashier's part, or they'd quit. Hammond begged 'em to stay. He even blew in his own bank account settlin' part of the back wages. But inside of three days his crew had dwindled to a Chinese cook and a Greaser mule driver. Took him a couple of weeks more to get wise to the fact that he was stranded there in the sand, six miles from a water hole, with a few cases of canned beef and a sack of corn meal.

Even then he didn't give up for good. He made his way back to a stage station and sent through a wire to Pyramid askin' for instructions. More than a month he waited, with no word from Gordon. Seems that by then Pyramid was too busy with other things. He'd cashed in on his bluff and was sortin' a new hand. And maybe he wa'n't anxious to have Hammond come East again. Anyway, he let him shift.

**T**HAT was when Hammond came so near starvin'. But he didn't—quite. For a year or more he managed to live somehow. Then one day he drove a team of boneyard mules into Blue Dog with a wagonload of stuff that the natives stared at. It was white, shiny stuff. Hammond said it was borax. He'd discovered a big deposit of it out there in the blisterin' sand. He was goin' to ship it back East and sell it. They thought he was nutty. He wasn't, though. On East they was usin' a lot of borax and demandin' more.

With a few thousand back of him Hammond might have got to be the Borax King right then; but as it was he held onto an interest big enough to make him quite a plute, and inside of a year he was located in Denver and earnin' his nickname of Hungry Jim. His desert appetite had stayed with him, you see, and such little whims as orderin' a three-inch tenderloin steak

frescoed with a pound of mushrooms and swimmin' in the juice squeezed from a pair of canvasback ducks got to be a reg'lar thing for him.

It was there he met and married the husky built head waitress and moved into a double-breasted mansion up on Capitol Hill. Also he begun wearin' diamond shirtstuds and givin' wine dinners.

"But, like others of his kind," goes on J. Bayard, "his luck didn't last. Because he'd made one big strike, he thought he knew the mining game from top to bottom. He lost hundreds of thousands on wild ventures. His long drawn out suit against Pyramid was another expensive luxury; for in the end Gordon beat him. "It was Hammond's big appetite that finished him

have them invited to that—well, what more could a fond parent ask?"

"H-m-m-m!" says I, rubbin' my chin. "Might get ourselves disliked if we sprung a ringer on 'em that way. Course, if this Royce boy could be trained to pull a broad A now and then, and be drilled into doin' a maxixe that would pass, I might take a chance. Mrs. McCabe could get their names on the guest list, all right. But I'd have to have a peck at Sonny first."

You see, with an ex-waitress mother, and a Hungry Jim for a father, Royce might be too tough for anything but a Coney Island spiefest. In that case J. Bayard would have to dig up a new scheme. So we starts out to look 'em up.

**A**CCORDIN' to schedule we should have found 'em both waitin' for us at the lawyer's, sittin' side by side and lookin' scared. But the boy that shows us into the reception room says how Mrs. Hammond is in the private office with the boss, and it looks like Sonny was late.

"I'll tell you," says I to J. Bayard. "You push in and



"It was there he met and married the husky built waitress."

off, though,—acute indigestion. So that is why Pyramid leaves us this item in his list: 'The widow or other survivor of James R. Hammond.' Well, I've found them both, Mrs. Hammond and her son Royce. I haven't actually seen either of 'em as yet; but I have located Mrs. Hammond's attorney and had several conferences with him. And what do you think? She won't take a dollar of Gordon's money for herself; nor will Royce directly. There's one thing, however, that she will probably not refuse,—any social assistance we may give to her son. That's her chief ambition, it seems,—to see Royce get into what she considers smart society. Well, what do you say, McCabe? Can't we help?"

"Depends a good deal on Royce," says I. "Course, if he's too raw a roughneck—"

"Precisely!" breaks in J. Bayard. "And as the son of such a man we must look for rather a crude youth, I suppose. But in order to carry out the terms of Gordon's will we must do some kind and generous act for these people. This seems to be our only chance. Now here is my plan."

And he's comin' on, J. Bayard is! He proposes that we use our combined pull with Mr. Twombly-Crane to land Royce—for one consecutive night, anyway—plunk in the middle of the younger set. He's leased a nice furnished cottage from one of the Meadowbrook bunch, not more'n a mile from the Twombly-Crane estate, got the promise of havin' the youngster's name put up at the Hunt Club for the summer privileges, and has arranged to have mother and son move in right in the height of the season.

"In time for the Twombly-Cranes' big costume ball?" I suggests.

"Nothing less," says he. "And if we could manage to

interview Mother, while I stick around out here and wait for the other half of the sketch."

He agrees to that, and has disappeared behind the ground-glass door when I discovers this slick-haired young gent sittin' at a desk over by the window,—a buddin' law clerk, most likely. And by way of bein' sociable I remarks casual that I hear how McGraw is puttin' Tesreau on the mound again today against the Cubs.

That don't get much of a rise out of him. "Aw, rully!" says he.

"I expect you'll be hikin' out for the grandstand yourself pretty quick?" I goes on.

"No," says he, shruggin' his shoulders annoyed. "I take no interest in baseball; none whatever, I assure you."

"Excuse my mentionin' it, then," says I. "But just what is your line,—croquet?"

"My favorite recreation," says he, "is dawning." And with that he turns away like he'd exhausted the subject.

But this gives me an idea. Maybe he could be hired to coach Royce.

"It's a thrillin' sport," says I. "And, by the way, there's a young chap due to show up here soon. I wonder if you've seen him around before,—young Hammond?"

"I beg pardon," says he, "but do you refer to Royce Hammond?"

"That's the guy," says I. "Kind of a husky young hick, eh?"

He stares at me cold and disapprovin'. "I am Royce Hammond!" says he.

You could have bought me for a yesterday's rain